DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 332 196 CS 212 822

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TITLE Metaphor, Narrative and Point of View: Shifting Our Perspective about "Literary Techniques" in Composition.
PUB DATE Mar 91
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (42nd, Boston, MA, March 21-23, 1991).
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Creative Writing; *Expository Writing; Heuristics; Higher Education; Metaphors; Personal Narratives; Student Attitudes; *Writing Attitudes; *Writing Instruction; *Writing Skills; *Writing Strategies; Writing Teachers
IDENTIFIERS Voice (Rhetoric)

ABSTRACT

Creative writing has fallen out of favor with teachers of composition because they have tended to link creative writing to the belletristic tradition of the nineteenth century. But if the nineteenth century can be accused of taking invention out of the writing process, as many scholars have asserted, it is possible to assert that the twentieth century has neglected and undervalued many of the heuristics that lie within the realm of creative writing, strategies that lead to good thinking and writing. Important links exist between creative writing and exposition. Although metaphor has been recognized as great writing and thinking heuristic since Plato and Aristotle, it continues to be considered primarily in the creative writing classroom. Likewise, although narrative has been considered one of the most important pedagogical devices for teaching since the Bible, it remains a writing technique explored primarily in the creative writing classroom. Writing from points of view other than the first person (a technique which is encouraged in many exposition classes) enables students to consider their material more objectively and to see themselves more clearly as writers. (PRA)

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METAPHOR, NARRATIVE AND POINT OF VIEW: SHIFTING OUR PERSPECTIVE ABOUT "LITERARY TECHNIQUES" IN COMPOSITION

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Creative Writing has fallen out of favor with teachers of composition it would seem; many teachers have tended to link the kind of writing learned and practiced in the Creative Writing class to the belletristic tradition of the nineteenth century. James Berlin in his book, Writing Insturction in Nineteenth Century America, points to Hugh Blair's emphasis on the "effect" of writing on the audience. This nineteenth century emphasis on effect represented a shift from the beautifully worked out grammar of the ancients to an emphasis on the effect of writing on audience that came to be associated with stylistics as well as attention to fancy literary effects at the expense of meaning. Since the "invention" of the ancients had been handed over to the Philosophy departments, for many there was a confusion about what was to be associated with writing. Contemporary pedagogy has continued, as a result, to discredit practices resembling literary effects and creative wriing and assign them to the archives of literary studies and literary (Creative) writing. If the nineteenth century can be accused of taking invention out of the writing process, as many scholars have asserted, I think I can safely assert that the twentieth century has neglected, indeed undervalued, many of the heuristics that lie within the realm of creative writing,

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strategies that lead to good thinking and writing.

Of course there was a strong basis for Ken Macrory's startling bock, UPTAUGHT back in 1960s, which made us look again at the correctly written, but bland and empty freshmen compositions so many of us were receiving from our students. They represented, as many compositionists have asserted, students who had mastered the standard code, but who were still unable to write meaningfully or effectively. And particularly back when Macorry's book came out , before open admissions hit academia, our classes had many more traditional students who arrived at college having mastered the standard code of English, but still deficient the academic skills of critical thinking and meaningful writing.

Yet important links exist between Creative Writing and Exposition. Metaphor is an example. Now metaphor is essentially the borrowing of a characteristic from one reference and attaching it to another by an act of transferrence. Its purpose is to clarify or enliven meaning. Its purpose is communication; we hope this communication is enhanced, enlivened, interesting communication. It should be if we have "metaphorized" effectively. Here's how Webster defines metaphor; from metapherein, meta (more) plus pherein (bear): a figure of speech in which a word or phrase literally denoting one kind of object or idea is used in place of another to suggest a likeness or analogy between them (as in "the ship plows the sea"). Metaphor supposes a correspondence between two different conceptuaal domains, and it involves a transfer of a property or characteristic from one of those domains to the other, a transfer which appeals vivdly to our imaginations and results in

new, clear meaning.

So much for metaphor. What about exposition? The handbooks inform us that exposition is any form of writing which is intended to inform or explain--literally, the exposing of meaning through analysis, definition, comparison and contrast, classification, or extended example or illustration. Certainly a lot of writing we do and teach others to do turns out to be exposition. which turns out to be a fancy term for writing which informs.

So where are the connections between metaphor and exposition? Both inform, clarify, and communicate meaning. We might even make the bold claim that metaphor IS exposition since it informs, clarifies, and communcates meaning. Does this make any of you uncomfortable? Consider this syllogism:

Any writing which informs, clarifies, and communicates meaning is EXPOSITION.
METAPHOR informs, clarifies, and communicates meaning.
Therefore: METAPHOR IS EXPOSITION.

Well, what do you think? If my premises are valid (and I think they are), the conclusion must be too (and I think it is). But we can say more. In fact, many of you have probably inferred what I'm going to say next. Metaphor is expsition, but exposition is not necessarily metaphor, does not have to have "in it" any transferrences of meaning from one conceptual domain to another. If we try hard, we can write expository prose which contains no metaphors or metaphoric language, but we cannot prevent metaphors

from conveying meaning--that is, informing, clarifying, communicating.

As a teacher of composition I feel that I ought to be teaching student writers to recognize and use metaphors, encouraging them to be creative. But how does one do this? Aristotle appears to believe that the ability to create metaphor can't be taught to another and that it is a sign of genius since it presupposes a keen sensitivity to resemblances. A colleague of mine who supervises student teachers once told me while we were discussing the topic of "How to teach writing" that the idea of teaching metaphor and figurative language is great, but students, and EVEN STUDENT TEACHERS, only remember that it's something connected with "like" or "as". "TRUE" I responded, because their teachers didn't teach them how to use it, didn't encourage them to look for it and recognize it in good writing." "Ah," he responded,"then we should teach metaphor as FUNCTION, how it functions." : Of COURSE.

How DOES one teach another to see resemblances and having taught this, to encode them linguistically, making the necessary transferences between different conceptual domains? I tell my students that we need to look for and consciously appreciate metaphor in others' writing and to push for the kind of discovery that metaphor implies, that is in seeing resemblances and correspondces between dissimilar conceptual domains. We students of writing and the teaching of writing know that the greatest writers are the ones who can do whatever it is necessary to do to create metaphors.

It is important to stress here that metaphors are the products

of thought and intelligence. They are not substitutes for thought. The ones that come easily may well be cliches, and we need to reject them. I trust we are all sufficiently weary of management and labor entering into "Marathon Negotiations," of sports announcers praising the "blinding speed" of athletes, and of politicians "playing hardall." Creative writers--and thinkers have no use for ossified phrases like these. At the conceptual level, most educated people find such metaphors stale and unenlightening.

According to I.A. Richards, language is naturally metaphoric, since the abstracting process that we go through when we metaphorize is done for the purpose of clearer and more vivd communication. Richards points out that it is the nature of our thinking to be perpetually busy with sorting and classifying references and comparing contexts and their parts and since our language symbolizes this thinking, our language must be highly, habitually, and naturally metaphoric. Lakeoff and Turner point out in their Field Guide to Poetic and Metaphor that "Metaphor is a tool so ordinary that we use it unconsciously and automatically, with so little effort that we hardly notice it. It is omnipresent: metaphor suffuses our thoughts, no matter what we are thinking about. It is accessible to everyone...It is conventional: metaphor is an integral part of our ordinary everyday thought and language. And it is irreplaceable; metaphor allows us to understand our selves and our world in ways that no other modes of thought can."

Gesa Kirsch in a recent study of three college students writing found visable in the protocol of one studnt writer that

her use of figurative language (which Kirsch defines as metaphors, similes and analogies) served her as a tool for exploration, as a way to help her understand what she is writing and to refine and pinpoint her ideas.

> At one point in her protocol for example, she tries to understand why exactly she believes writing is important in more than the ordinary sense of utility. She explains to herself that 'it's (writing is) a tool for analyzing ourselves and our lives, it's like going on a very difficult hike and just being proud afterwards that you did it; it can be a landmark for you even if you never do it again; something very tough." This comparison of writing to hiking leads Cnythia to talk about writing as a rigorous activity that exercises ones (mental) faculties....The metaphors a writer uses to represent her composing process(i.e. cooking, sculpting, tailoring, will lead her to emphasize some aspects of her composing process. Her use of exceptional metaphors guides her composing process(225).

In other words, the great poets and the great writers, have and use the same tools all of us have and use. They are different because they know how to use these tools better than we know how to use them only because they have worked harder and practiced more.

An understanding of other's perspectives, too, is related to the ability to deal maturely with point of view in composition. James Kinneavy theorizes that the developing writer moves from an

awareness of self or "I" to "other" and finally embraced "world" in his understanding. Kinneavy, along with empiracal researchers such as Flavell, Rubin, Kroll, Crowhurst and Pichet agree that that an important part of a writer's development is his development of audience awareness, or his ability to adapt text to varying audiences. Again, I suggest that strategies associated with creative writing have proven useful and adaptable to the composition classrooom. NARRATIVE offers a natural tool for giving writers practice in changing perspective while writing in a genre in which they seem easily able to work. Narrative, the basis of the short story, "a narrated account, story" according to the American Heritage Dictionary. Students can narrate something that happened to them easily and naturally, and particularly in the first person. To write a narrative is my first assignment in both Creative Writing and Basic Skills. The narrative is the basis of the short story, Janet Burroway tells us in her textbook, Writing Fiction: a guide to narrative craft, and a simple narrative is one of the most natural genres of writing available to the writing teacher. Most students have had interesting episodes of one kind or another in their lives, and they enjoy writing about them. Ah, there's the basis for a good short story, or perhaps it could serve as an illustration in an expository essay.

Narrative also offers the writing teacher a most logical vehicle for experimenting with point of view. Write a short narrative, I tell my students, and then change the pronouns to second and then third person. We talk about conjugation of verbs in foreign languages before we begin this exercise. Je suis, tu

es, il,elle est: I am, you are, he,she it is. When students begin experimenting with changing the point of view from which a narrative is written, they become dramatically aware of how their writing affects audience. "Second person is intimate" they tell me," whereas third is more distant."

Peter Elbow 's article on "Academic Discourse" in this year's February issue of College English makes the point:

> I want to argue for one KIND of nonacademic discourse that is particularly important to teach. I mean discourse that tries to render experience rather than explain it. To render experience is to convey what I see when I look out the window, what it feels like to walk down the street or fall down--to tell what it's like to be me or live my life. I'm particularly concerned that we help students learn to write language that conveys to others a sense of their experience--or indeed, that mirrors back to themselves a sense of their own experience from a little distance, once it's out there on paper. I'm thinking about autobiographical stories, moments, sketches--perhaps even a piece of fiction or poetry now and again.(136-137)

the nineteenth century. James Berlin in his book, Writing Instruction in Nineteenth Century America points to Hugh Blair's emphasis on the "effect" of writing on the audience. Indeed, Cambell, Blair and Whately have been credited with "working out a detailed series of statements concerning the relation betweeen the

communicative act and the mind of the listener-reader" This represented a shift from the beautifully worked out grammar of the ancients to an emphasis on the effect of writing on audience, and came to be associated with stylistics and attention to fancy literary effects at the expense of meaning. Since the "invention" of the ancients had been handed over to the Philosophy departments, for many there was a confusion about what was to be associated with writing. Contemporary pedagogy has continued, as a result, to discredit practices resembling literary effects and creative writing and assign them to the archives of literary studies.

Yet important links between exist between Creative Writing and exposition. Recognized as a great writing and thinkin heuristic since Plato and Aristotle, metaphor continues to be considered primarily in the creative writing classroom. Yet both I.A. Richards and Kenneth Burke see metaphor as the basis, indeed the very core, of thinking.

Likewise, since the BIBLE, narrative has been considered one of the most important pedagogical devices for teaching. St.

Augustine reinforces the narrative as the primary method by which we teach in his treatise, On Christian Doctrine. Yet narrative remains a writing technique explored primarily in the creative writing classroom.

The point of view from which they write has usually not been considered by my creative writing students when they arrive in Creative Writing. Yet this has proven in my classroom to be a key factor in getting students to move away from merely personal writing encouraged in many exposition classes: writing from other points of view besides first person enables them to consider their material more objectively and subsequently has an important part in making them see themselves more clearly as writers. Alice Koller expresses it exactly in her autobiographical novel, An Unknown Woman when she has her protagonist decide,

" But I could tell the story about HER instead of thinking of it as being about ME. By changing the pronouns I can get some distance. I, the storyteller, can be the observer of Alice, this ignorant female...Yes..."(p.86).

Yet experimenting in writing from different points of view is relegated primarily to the Creative Writing classroom.

Though I've been teaching Creative Writing for over ten years, it wasn't until last semester that I decided to look for the relationship between Creative Writing and exposition. I"ve had a hunch for a long time that there was important material that students learned in this class that was useful in all their writing. My class requirements are demanding so I know that students aren't taking this class because its easy. I require

regular weekly graded exercises in writing fiction, a short story, and a portfolio of poetry. Yet students meet these requirements anxiously and with enthusiasm. Student writing is regularly duplicated and subjected to in-class critique by other students. The in-class criticism is SERIOUS and much more rigorous than in in the other writing classes I teach.

I surveyed my creative writing class last semester regarding what they considered the value of the class to writing tasks encountered in other college courses. One-hundred percent of the twenty-four students surveyed answered that they felt they had developed writing skills that applied to writing tasks required in other college classes and skills which would probably be applicable to their jobs after they graduated from college. In order to be sure that the important skills were skills traditionally linked to CREATIVE WRITING, I isolated certain exercises that I feel are not regularly taught in exposition and questioned students on these. I asked the students specifically how the class exercises in writing narrative, metaphor and writing in different persons had helped them; the general response was that emphasizing these techniques and their use in class had helped the students to expand their perspectives and see themselves as writers; at the same time, the students believed that the development of theses techniques had given them new tools for expressing themselves more clearly and delightfully. The poet Richard Hugo, known as a great writing teacher, has written, "Once language exists only to convey information, it is dying."